

Careers and development

Yeung At Heart –

RISE – Four more elements of a great presentation



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Being able to give a good presentation is often the mark of a great leader. While competent managers give merely adequate presentations, truly inspirational leaders give presentations that not only educate but also engage and even entertain. The good news is that presenting well is a skill that can be *learned*.

In last month's article (<http://www.hkiaat.org/e-newsletter/Sep-11/Present%20I.pdf>), I laid out what I call the “four Ss” of preparing for a presentation. Whether you are writing a short, informal speech without PowerPoint lasting only 15 minutes or a formal presentation with elaborate slides for a presentation of more than an hour, the “four Ss” will help you to map out and write an effective presentation.

In this month's article, I'm going to introduce the RISE acronym, with four additional steps that you should work through *after* you've put together the first draft of your presentation.

Relevance

I once coached a senior executive who was preparing to give a presentation to a crowd of 800 sales people within his organization. I took him through the “four Ss” of preparing his presentation and he seemed to understand them all clearly. Yet when we met for a second time to review his presentation, it was clear that he had lost his way. His presentation included too many tangential facts and distracting material. We spent about an hour going through every piece of information, with me asking him: “Is that directly relevant to your audience?”

As it turned out, about half of what he had included could be taken out. In his desire to be inclusive he had included too much information – information that might have been interesting for *some* of his colleagues, but not for this particular audience. So the first letter of the RISE acronym is for relevance. What facts and knowledge are of greatest relevance to *this specific* audience?



Insight

There's a saying that in winning over an audience, you should start by telling them what they're going to hear, then tell them what you want them to hear, and finish by telling them what you told them. To my mind, that's not a bad way of thinking about a presentation, but let me spell it out in a little more detail.

Begin by introducing the key messages or themes that you will be covering. In the body of your presentation, elaborate on the key messages in more detail. Finally, in your wrap-up or conclusion, remind the audience of the key messages that you wanted to get across.

So the second letter of the RISE acronym is for insight. What are the key insights that you wish to deliver? If you could only have your audience remember a handful of key facts or sentiments from your presentation, what would they be? Go through your presentation to make sure you have a clear idea of the key messages – no more than five or, at most, a half-dozen – that you want to get across. This will help you to avoid confusing your audience with too many other, less insightful or unimportant messages.

Stories

In the “four Ss” of preparing to give a presentation, I talk about the importance of stories. And the third letter of the RISE acronym returns us to stories. Let me say it again: presentations filled only with factual information are dull. If you are only conveying facts, why give a presentation at all? You could simply type up the facts and send them out as emails.

Effective presentations are about drawing an audience in, making them want to listen to what you have to say and making the content come to life through examples and anecdotes. So once you've written the first draft of your presentation, go through it again to check that you have included at least a few personal illustrations, vignettes and stories.

Engagement

The final letter refers to engagement. Simply reading your speech out does not constitute an *engaging* presentation. Once you've drafted your presentation, practise delivering it. Say it out loud. And as you practise, use your voice and move your body as if you were on stage. Think about the pitch of your voice – introduce vocal light and shade where appropriate. Drop your voice to a stage whisper if you want to inject some drama into the proceedings or speak slowly and loudly when you want to get a key message across.

Think about your physical movements, your posture, how you might walk around a stage, and what gestures you might use too. Without these visual cues, you may as well just stand still behind a lectern and read out your presentation.

Presenting well can help make you stand out from the crowd. So if you wish to deliver a winning presentation, be sure to RISE to the challenge.

